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Leadership Competency Series

Developing Right Aptitude is the key to success

Everyone will have an inherent aptitude in doing something better and feel happy when they activate that instinct. While this search for happiness is the ultimate human goal, many would settle down for small things, but achievers won't stop since they know where they want to go and make sure that they move in that direction, rising progressively, writes M R Chandramowly.

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a thousand rupees note and asked, "Who would like to have this?" Many hands went up. He said, "That's fine; before I give this away, let me do this." He crumpled the note and then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well", he continued, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty, and asked "Now, who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air. He taught the audience a lesson. No matter what he did to the currency, people still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth, Rs 1000.

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, one will never lose individual worth and value.

Discover who you are

The worth of our lives is not in what we know, what we do or whom we know, but on discovering who we are. "The idea of sticking to what you are good at is the foundation for a whole new approach in management, and each person has the most room for growth in the area of his greatest strength" says Donald Clifton (Play to your Strengths).

Highly successful entrepreneurs, as well as top scientists, artists, athletes and entertainers throughout history have achieved greatness by focusing on their areas of strength.

Latent strength

Everyone has a natural 'gift' of an aptitude in something. You may be especially good in working with numbers, drawing pictures, teaching children, produce/listen or love music, have athletic ability, good in writing/speaking, or working with your hands with dexterity and so on. How do you discover your natural talents? First, write down a list of those things that you do effortlessly. Next, make a list of those things you do and when doing those you may not notice the time fly by.

Finally, write all the activities that make you feel great and fulfilling. Examine the three lists for commonalties, which are likely to be the areas of your natural aptitude and talent. Secret lies here. Those are the areas of your potential which if developed further can lead you to success.

Persisting desires

What are your prolonged unfulfilled desires? What pushes you to do an activity? Do you look at some activity carried on by others and strongly feel that you would like to do that? These yearnings trigger a magnetic force in you to do something. It starts from childhood and doesn't end when we grow up.

The young Rahul was the most talkative person in the class. During the second year I noticed that he was and active student in the entire college. His questioning and zeal to understand things compelled me to prepare more before delivering guest lectures on HR. He topped the class in the subject and moving on, he maintained contact with me and we use to have brief coaching sessions or discussion on career topics. He led several student groups in various student projects and demonstrations. I could see an emerging good communicator in him. He was able to clearly and powerfully express his thoughts carefully balanced it with concern for others. Few years later he came to my office.

He shared with me his plans to start some coaching workshops on communication. Today, he is heading Kapoor's workshop on effective communication, conducting programs for several organisations, besides earning a good name in event management arena. I am carefully watching his growth and success. He discovered the inner flame of power of communication and made use of the opportunities. He is continuing his effort in expanding his orbit and yet I have never missed his 'thanks giving calls' on any September 5th (Teacher' Day) from last 10 years.

Try to reflect and recollect the moments of happiness in your personal life and the progression in your desires. A child is happy getting a new toy or a big toffee. After crawling for few weeks it achieves the balance to stand on own legs with the support of a wall .You can see a glowing happiness in the child, when it progresses. When the kid correctly writes the first word, reproduces the rhymes without missing the tune or beat, it is yet another stage of happiness.

Being happy

The kid grows up and discovers the emotional and psychological rewards for his achievements and gains an urge to do things to get happiness.

While the search for happiness is the ultimate human goal, each one discovers own path, pace and process. Those who constantly cling on to one level without moving up expanding their activity orbits may settle down for small things and they are happy with that. But the achievers won't stop. They know where they want to go and make sure that they move in that direction and also converge their thinking and all actions towards that. They discover their core competence and rise progressively in their assignments, projects, work etc.

Success differentiator

Amar and Zameer are at the age of 26. They have the same IQ, skills, say 100 units of behavioural and functional competencies. Both of them are IT engineers, and hold a postgraduate diploma in business management.

Both had joined different organisations and drew almost similar compensation as project associates in the year 2001. During 2003 both moved up in their salary and position. Amar sits back feels happy proud and comfortable with his progress and achievement at the same time Zameer's fire is flaming up within him.

He becomes more attentive and watches all the changes around him and within him. He decides to build on new skills and widens his shoulder to take on more responsibilities.

He is excited about multitasking and enjoys sharing his thoughts with others influencing them to move as well. In the process he is more thrilled about the vast opportunities and breadth and depth in the ocean of learning.

New competencies

Over a period of time, during 2006, Zameer continued acquiring new competencies at a compounded growing rate of 6 per cent. Amar grew at only 1 per cent per year.

Realise the difference of a bank account over 20 years earning, 3 per cent as against 8 per cent. Similarly the career related capability of Amar at the age of 26 would have 122 units at 1 per cent annual growth, whereas Zameer bags over 320 units at 6 per cent annual growth. At the age of 50, both Amar and Zameer are in two different leagues. Amar now is heading a unit of 300 employees and Zameer is a group technical director. How did Zameer Succeed? He focused on his strengths. He experienced the immense satisfaction that comes in becoming superb at something, by using the Seven Wonders of the World; to touch, to taste, to see, to hear, to run, to laugh and to love.

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